ANIMAL EYE CONSULTANTS OF IOWA

Animal Eye Consultants of Iowa

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Policy #38	**"Occupational Health and Safety for Individuals with Animal Contact"**
Approval Date: 8/16/2021	

A. Purpose

The following policy aims to promote a healthy and safe workplace for those working with or around animals in teaching and research activities under the Iowa University (AEC).

B. Background

The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* requires that "an occupational health program must be part of the overall animal care and use program.". The goal of the occupational health and safety program is to prevent occupational injury and illness by avoiding, controlling, or eliminating hazards in the workplace as well as to provide for early diagnosis and treatment when necessary.

The overall AEC Occupational Health and Safety program (OH&S) is a multi-departmental collaborative effort that includes identification of hazards, risk assessment, implementation of personnel training and preventative measures, as well as medical reviews and recommendations, when needed. The program involves the Environmental Health and Safety Office (EH&S), the Animal Care and Use Program (as represented by the Vice President for Research as the Institutional Official [IO], the AEC Veterinary Staff [AEC], and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee [IACUC]), the AEC Office (ORA), the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), the Radiation Safety Committee (RSC), the research program (as represented by the Principal Investigators [PIs]), contracted occupational medicine consultants (MultiCare Centers of Occupational Medicine), and administration (e.g., Human Resources Services [HRS], Facility Operations, etc.).

Animal-related work involves specific potential risks such as injuries related to animal handling (i.e., bites, scratches, etc.), animal allergies, and zoonotic diseases, which require specialized training and access to medical surveillance. At AEC, the OH&S

program related to animal contact (named Occupational Health Training – Animals, OHT-A) is overseen by the Animal Welfare Program (AWP) within ORA.

C. Policy

1. Participation in OHT-A

a. Training

The OHT-A Program provides information and training to individuals regarding the occupational health risks associated when working with or around animals. This training includes species specific information in the area of zoonotic diseases, allergens, animal bites, scratches, biological hazards, physical hazards, and precautions to be taken to address personal risk factors such as pregnancy, illness, or decreased immunocompetence. All individuals who have direct contact with research or teaching animals as part of AEC activities should receive training for zoonotic diseases related to the species they will be working with. Individuals listed on an Animal Subjects Approval Form (ASAF), including personnel protocols must go through the OHT-A training in MyResearch. This is required before animal related work begins and should be updated at least every three years. If there is a change in species exposure the training should occur prior to working with the new species. Visiting researchers may be exempt if they can provide evidence of enrollment in a similar program at their home institutions. Training materials can be made available for those who do not have access to MyResearch.

b. Medical Surveillance

All individuals working with research and teaching animals are encouraged to participate in the risk assessment/health questionnaire and medical review element of the program**. Enrollment is highly recommended for animal care staff and individuals at higher risk due to a compromised immune system (e.g. women who are pregnant, individuals on immunosuppressive drugs, individuals with AIDS).** Individuals must select to either enroll in the medical surveillance process or opt out as part of completing the required OHT-A training. Individuals who opt out can choose to change their response and enroll at any time. The cost associated with participation is centrally funded by the university so is at no cost to the individual.

The risk assessment and health questionnaire should be updated every three years or sooner if there is a significant change in health history or new species exposure.

c. Ancillary Personnel

Individuals who do not work directly with research and teaching animals however have exposure to animals or animal dander during their routine work (e.g. Facilities Operations staff or research staff in shared labs) should be provided information pertaining to animal allergens. Training information is available at https://animal-eye-iowa.com/forms/occupational-health-and-safety-for-individuals-with-animal-contact/ as well as (https://ehs.animal-eye-iowa.com/ehs-training/factsheets/factsheets-faqanimalallergens/). Individuals with animal exposure can also go through the OHT-A training program at MyResearch and have the option to enroll in the medical surveillance program.

Access to animal facilities and procedure areas should be limited to only essential personnel for both security/biosecurity reasons and to limit personnel exposure to animals. Animal transport should be consistent with IACUC Policy #33 and done in a manner to minimize exposure during transit.

2. Other important elements of the Occupational Health Program

a. Respiratory Protection Program

Employees required to wear a respirator must be enrolled in AEC?s Respiratory Protection Program (https://ehs.animal-eye-iowa.com/respiratory-protection/). Individuals who voluntarily choose to wear a respirator should be provided information on the voluntary use of respirators.

b. Reporting Injury or Illness

Formal procedures are in place that require reporting of work-related injuries and illnesses as described in the Safety Policy and Procedures Manual (SPPM) 2.24 "Reporting Accidental Injuries and Work-Related Injuries". The procedures include submission of an incident report to HRS, who will forward it to EH&S, ORA biosafety, and/or AEC as appropriate for incident evaluation and implementation of corrective actions.

c. Project Specific Risk Assessments

IACUC ASAFs involving the use of hazardous material (radiological, chemical, biological, etc.) are reviewed by the Research Safety team as described in IACUC

Guideline #11. A safety SOP is written and included with the ASAF and is available to both research and vivarium personnel. Cages and animal rooms doors must be properly labeled when hazards are present.

d. Other Required Training

As per AEC Safety Policies and Procedures, newly hired personnel must receive safety training during the New Employee Orientation session. The primary responsibility for informing personnel regarding occupational health and safety belongs to the PI or the individual's supervisor, who are supported by other entities such as the AEC, Biosafety Officer, and EH&S in this task. Facility managers also help to provide specific training regarding occupational health and safety in the care and use of animals and use of hazardous agents. Biosafety and Radiation Safety provide specific training to those who will be working with biological, chemical, and physical (e.g., radioactivity) hazards. New employees who will work with radioactive materials must complete a radiation safety course prior to start working with such materials.

D. Procedure

1. Medical Surveillance

a. Medical Questionnaire

The occupational health surveillance is the part of the overall OH&S program that begins by individuals completing the OHT-A training described above and then opting to participate in the medical evaluation. Individuals will fill out an online risk assessment and medical questionnaire. In order to ensure the form is complete it is recommended you have your vaccine history available.

b. Medical Review

AEC has partnered with MultiCare Occupational Medicine to conduct the medical reviews. Completed medical questionnaires are sent to MultiCare for an occupational health physician's evaluation. Recommendations are made to individuals based upon hazards posed by animals; materials used; exposure intensity, duration, and frequency; and personnel susceptibility/health history. Depending upon the evaluation, recommendations may include medical services, including Tetanus vaccination and other prophylaxis. Individuals can elect to participate at any time, but this invitation is provided during initial training and

at minimum every three years thereafter. The cost for the medical evaluation services are covered by the university and is therefore free to the individual.

c. Medical Services

If medical recommendations include vaccines or other medical services individuals can elect to have these done by their private health care provider or can work with ORA to identify a health care facility in their area to use. Payment for the service or reimbursement can be coordinated with the Office of Research Assurances (IACUC@animal-eye-iowa.com or 319-826-6217).

E. Resources

1. National Research Council, 1997. Occupational Health and Safety in the Care and Use of Research Animals. The National Academies Press, Washington, DC.
2. National Research Council, 2011. Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. 8th Edition. The National Academies Press, Washington, DC.
3. AEC MyResearch OHT-A Training and Medical Questionnaire
   https://myresearch.animal-eye-iowa.com/compliance/iacuc/oht-a-training
4. AEC Zoonoses Fact Sheets and the AEC Occupational Health and Safety for Individuals with Animal Contact